

WRITING FOR SOCIOLOGISTS

920: 504/703:01

Professor Karen A. Cerulo, Department of Sociology

Wednesday –1:00PM-3:40PM

Davison Hall Seminar Room—Rm. 127

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Office Hours: Wednesday: 12:30PM-1:00PM; 3:40PM to 4:10PM
...and by appointment

OBJECTIVES

Learning Goals: This course is designed with two very specific goals in mind: 1) to help every student prepare an article length paper for publication or a dissertation chapter, and 2) to train students in the art of manuscript review.

Methods for Achieving Learning Goals: Students enrolled in the course are expected to bring to the class a completed course paper, qualifying paper draft, or dissertation chapter draft that they wish to prepare for journal submission or their dissertation. Each student's work will be reviewed at least twice over the course of the semester. Both the professor and students enrolled in the class will provide authors with written feedback on their work—*constructive* criticism designed to improve every author's final product.

The class will also address some basic writing issues: writing resources, pitfalls of academic writing, choosing a journal for your work, and the actual process of journal reviewing.

DESIGN OF THE CLASS

There are three requirements for the course:

1) As an author, you will be assigned at least two (possibly three) classes for the presentation of your work. (Enrollment numbers will determine the final number.) For each of these meetings, you must send me your completed paper via email and I will post the paper on our Sakai site. *Your paper must be available for review one week prior to our class meeting so that everyone has time to read and comment on the work.* I am a stickler about deadlines in this context, so, out of respect to those commenting on your work, please make sure to meet these deadlines.

Presumably, your first posting is ready to go as you came into the class with a completed piece of work. Your second posting should reflect a “new and improved draft” of your work—one that takes into account the suggestions of your “reviewers.” The same is true for the third presentation if enrollment numbers allows a third round of review.

As would be true for any journal submission, your second (and possibly third) draft should be accompanied by a “cover letter” itemizing the reviewer suggestions you chose to incorporate into your paper as well as your reasons for rejecting any reviewer suggestions. If you are taking the course for credit, **this portion of the course will account for 55% of your grade.**

Design of the Class, con't.

2) As a reader/reviewer, you are required to a) read the two papers being reviewed in each class and b) produce a 1-2 page (single spaced) review of the paper assigned to you each week. (No longer—OK? I don't want this part of the course to be too onerous.) Each student will produce one review per week—half of the class will be assigned to one paper; half will be assigned to the other paper. (Note: if we have a third round of presentations, no written reviews will be required—only oral feedback to the author.)

Your reviews should cover the following points:

- a) a concise statement of the paper's topic and goals.
- b) a short paragraph detailing the paper's strong points.
- c) short paragraphs itemizing potential problems with the paper along with suggestions for overcoming those problems.

To access papers: a) go to <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal> and log in. b) go to our course site; if you registered for 504, that will be called "Selected Sociological Problems"; if you registered for 703, it may be called Writing Seminar". c) look at the bar on the left side of the screen and click on "Resources". d) look for the paper using the author's last name. If you have any problems logging in, call Sakai Help at **848.445.8721**

Your comments must be emailed *to the author and to me* by Tuesday at noon—again, *please be on time*. If you are taking the course for credit, **this portion of the course will account for 35% of your grade.**

3) You are expected to attend every class and fully participate in class discussions of the paper. If you are taking the course for credit, **this portion of the course will account for 10% of your grade.**

Some additional things to note:

- ✓ We are here to constructively support one another. Please take care to refrain from cruel, thoughtless or sarcastic feedback in your written or oral comments. Think of it this way ... you do not enjoy thoughtless feedback, so don't give it to others.
- ✓ ***All reading and comments must be completed prior to class.*** Our classes revolve around discussion. Therefore, familiarity with the material is essential.
- ✓ The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Knowing this, our classroom should be considered a "safe place" for everyone. Students are encouraged to engage in discussion and debate related to the readings and topics scheduled for the class provided that one's views are not intended to provoke, insult, or damage another member of the class or the instructor. To facilitate such an environment, all of us (students and instructor) must act with mutual respect and common courtesy.

CLASS SCHEDULE

JAN. 17: *Introduction to the Class*

Today we will: assign presentation days, talk a bit about the pitfalls of academic writing, discuss selection of a good venue for your manuscript, and look at the back-stage of journal operations.

Assignment:

- ✓ Make sure you are registered on the Sakai site. If you cannot access the site, please contact Sakai personnel at sakai@rutgers.edu or **848.445.8721**. Sakai Help Desk representatives are available **Monday through Friday 8:00AM-6:00PM**.
- ✓ Read Becker: Chapter 1.

JAN. 24: *The Bones of Journal Articles:* Today, I will do a little lecturing and we will do lots of discussion surrounding the basics of producing a publishable article/chapter.

Assignment:

First:

- ✓ Read “Brief Guide for Writing Papers” and Graff and Birkenstein

Then, I am going to use three very different articles so we can compare the various approaches to writing sections of journal articles.

Polletta, F., & Tomlinson, C. 2014. “Date Rape After the Afterschool Special: Narrative Trends in the Televised Depiction of Social Problems.” *Sociological Forum* 29(3): 527-548.

LeCount, R. J. 2017. “More Black than Blue? Comparing the Racial Attitudes of Police to Citizens.” *Sociological Forum*.32(SI): 1051-1072.

Laurent-Simpson, A. 2017. “Considering Alternate Sources of Role Identity: Childless Parents and Their Animal “Kids”.” *Sociological Forum* 32(3):610-634

Feel free to read all the articles in their entirety. But for specific class discussion:

- ✓ Read and contrast the “Introduction” in Polletta and Tomlinson and LeCount.
- ✓ Read and contrast pp. 529-34 in Polletta and Tomlinson and “pp. 612-616 in Laurent-Simpson
- ✓ Read and contrast the “Data and Methods” sections in all three articles.
- ✓ Read and contrast “Results” LeCount and Laurent-Simpson.
- ✓ Read and contrast the “Discussion and Conclusions” in all three articles.

Oh ... one more thing:

- ✓ Tomorrow is my birthday. Make sure to tell me how youthful I look.

PRESENTATIONS BEGIN

- JAN. 31:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- FEB. 7:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- FEB. 14:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- FEB. 21:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- FEB 28:** Individual Meetings
- MAR. 7:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- MAR. 14:** **No meeting—Spring Break. Cut loose!**
- MAR. 21:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- MAR. 28:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- APR. 4:** *Two Paper Presentations*
- APR. 11:** Individual Meetings:
- APR. 18:** *Four Presentations*—here, we will focus only on problem areas from the last set of reviews.
- APR. 25:** *Four Paper Presentations*—here, we will focus only on problem areas from the last set of reviews.